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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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07/14/00

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

As he'll attest in his column later in this issue, the weather here in New England this past week has been almost perfect! Sun, warmth, cool breezes, and little humidity. And of course I wasn't on vacation to really enjoy it! But, I'll take it. And vacation is coming up in another week, so I can wait for my turn to really enjoy the weather!

Industry news picked up quite a bit after the holiday and through this week, finally. While the flavor continues to pertain to the ups and downs of the various "dot-coms" out there, other news more "interesting" found its way to us.

I don't have much to say in this area this week, but I do have some comments for the gaming part of my editorial this week - a section that I've been neglecting editorially for quite some time. I'll just drop a hint as to its contents here; and that is a recent decision made in Canada's British Columbia pertaining to "violent" video games. Here we go again, folks!

So, I'm hoping that you're all enjoying the wonderful summer so far. Sit back and relax and take it all in - we don't have enough of them, it seems these days.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
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Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Mother Nature never ceases to amaze me. The weather here has been much cooler and drier than southern New England should be at this time of year... But I'll take it!

Since I rent, I don't have to worry about lawn care like SOME PEOPLE do, but I still enjoy a well cared for lawn. Luckily, my landlord takes great pride in the lawn and plants around our house. And the best part of all is that I don't have to deal with it! It all works out in the end though... snow removal is MY responsibility.

I guess it's really true that everything is a trade-off. Most of you know that I've had a spiffy new PC laptop for the past year or so. I use it quite a bit because... well, let's face it; it's faster, it shows something like four billion colors, there's tons of software available for it, and it gives me access to relatively inexpensive upgrades and add-ons.

But damn it, it just doesn't have a personality. It's just a machine. Every Atari computer I've ever had, from my first 1040 to my Portfolio,

Stacy, and TT has had a definite personality. Using any of them was more like chatting with a friend than using a machine.

I've used several of the available ST emulators, and they all did what they were supposed to do. But they were all burdened with running under Windows. Microsoft must include some sort of "personality killer" code or something! <grin>

I've pretty much dumped Windows altogether and I run Linux on the PC now. It's a really neat system, but it's quite a bit different from both Windows and TOS. Lately, I've been seeing the dim, subtle glimmer of a personality. It'll never be TOS, I can assure you of that, but it's still a great system.

I STILL haven't gotten around to seriously installing either Linux or NetBSD (another Unix-like OS) on my TT... much to the consternation of my friend Rob Mahlert of Atari Users Net... but I really do fully intend to... one of these days.

This is my first week back to work after a week of vacation and, as expected, I'm exhausted. Just one more sign that I'm getting older, I guess.

Well, let's get on with the UseNet STuff...

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

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D Bruce Moore asks about saving data from ST disks:

"My Atari was stolen a few years ago. I still have diskettes full of MIDI files, though, and would like to get them on to a PC.

Problem is, these diskettes were never formatted in the way that allows PCs to read them...and I don't have the Atari ST to be able to transfer them to a diskette that CAN be read on a PC..."

Jim DeClercq provides and interesting option:

"One solution is a book on DOS, which may help with Windoze 9X, which runs on an emulation of DOS. If you know the format, you can set up a virtual drive in DOS which reads the format you have.

If you cannot find one, you might post to the group or e-mail me. Right now, I am home, which is 432 US miles from where I work, and that book is at work."

Bruce tells Jim:

"The above URL to the free App worked like a charm! I had a composition notated on the Atari disk that I thought was lost forever, and I saw it for the first time in 6 years yesterday!!!!"

'Phantomm' asks for help with the new STinG:

"Greetings Atari Folks....

Could use some info on updating to the latest version of STinG.

I see that there has been a new release, Version 1.26!

According to the STInG DIALER.APP I have the following versions...
Dialer Version = 01.16
STInG Version = 01.20

First, I would like to update to the latest version before the release of 1.26. Then I would like to upgrade to the new 1.26 version if it is bug free.

Now when updating, do I have to install the complete latest version or can I just copy the updated files over into my current working STInG setup?

If I just need to replace a few files, which ones do I need to install to have the latest version before the release of 1.26?

And are there any known bugs or problems with the version of STInG before the release of the new 1.26 version?

The version I am running now on my CT2B Falcon works fine, but if there are improvements with the latest updates then I'd like to try them out."

AtariGalen tells PhantomM:

"To the best of my knowledge, 1.26 is the version that supercedes 1.20. I do not think 1.21-1.25 were ever publicly available.

As for the rest of your questions, STInG 1.26 has been available for only one day, so no one knows the answers to them yet. Download the package, read the instructions, try it out yourself, and then answer your own questions here. Others (such as myself) would be very interested in knowing them too."

Frank Lawrence tells PhantomM and Galen:

"The following URL to get the new STING & Dialer and how I updated.

<http://www.ettnet.se/~dlanor/sting/html/sting.htm>

I made copies of the old STING (Auto folder), TCP.STX, UDP.STX, DIALER.APP, SERIAL.CPX, STING(Internal).CPX, STINGPORT.CPX, STINGROT.CPX. Then replace these files with the new ones and in a folder put the rest of the rest of the Modules with A STY ext. and not needed unless you are networking with other computers an if you need them change the the ext to STX. BTW copy down the settings of your SERIAL.CPX and STING internals and reconfigure.

Hope this helps, BTY Dialer can once again be used as an .ACC."

Lyndon Amsdon adds:

"I was wondering where it was available from apart from the ftp site chaplie. Hopefully this version will work on my ST. I tried so hard to get 1.22 working. I'll download it today.

I can't wait to get on to the chaplie ftp!...

A few months back I was having trouble with sting 1.22. Guess what... I'm having trouble with 1.26!.

I tried reinstalling 1.22 twenty odd times. From floppy using a minimal system (HSMODEM7 STinG Xcontrol) tried TOS 2.06 and 1.62. Tried using cops and Zcontrol.

Everytime I loaded a programme it would lock up either from Hard disk or floppy.

Sting 1.26 does exactly the same on my STe!

So I tried it on another computer. The other computer was an STe with external blitter chip like just like mine.

It worked fine!

The only thing it could be is:

- 1) 4mb of RAM (yeah right this is causing a problem)
- 2) TUS developments tos switcher (tried it in 1.62 and 2.06, so it can't be that)
- 3) TUS IDE interface. I think this is the problem. I've never had any trouble before, but it can't be anything else.

Anyone had any problems with it?"

Trevor Spencer tells Lyndon:

"Yes, it doesn't load, just "bombs" with 2 bombs.

Now experimentation is called for to see if I can find out why."

Galen now comes back and asks a question about printers:

"I'm wondering what currently available printers work with NVDI 5. Note that I'm not asking what printers work with NVDI -- that's on their webpage. Unfortunately, most of the printers there are no longer made. To get the discussion rolling:

The Epson 740, 850, and 900 use ESC/P2 language, which NVDI supports. Unfortunately, the 740 is the only one of these still available, and it is being discontinued this year. The Epson 740i, 760, and 860 use ESC/Raster, which is not the same thing as ESC/P2. On Epson's web site, they mention how to drive the 740, 850, and 900 with DOS, but do not consider the newer printers to be DOS capable, leading me to wonder if the new Epsons can be used with NVDI.

Pretty much any HP Deskjet made speaks HPL3, so 600 dpi black can be obtained easily enough. Most HP printers understand earlier versions of their languages (bless HP for this), so I suspect (but do not know for sure) that 300 dpi color is obtainable from some models. What currently available HP printer can do 600 dpi color using NVDI, if any?

Both the Brother laser and the HP lasers speak some superset of HPL3, so again, 600 dpi black should be easy enough.

I fear that the soon to be discontinued Epson 740 is the only printer now in stores that can provide good color printing with

NVDI. I would love to be proved wrong on this."

Greg Goodwin tells Galen:

"I have a curious question that gets weirder than your question. I would like to know what printers are available for the NVDI that works with MagicMac."

Galen replies:

"It SHOULD be the same list! As far as I know (haven't personally tested it) NVDI 5 was the first version to have MagicPC and MagicMac support built in. Previously, there were separate versions for each hardware set."

Edward Baiz asks Galen:

"Have you tried the Epson Photo printers? I use the Epson Photo 700 printer with NVDI 5 and it does an excellent job."

Galen bounces back and tells Edward:

"I'm glad to hear it. Have you compared it to the 740? I'd be interested in hearing how it compares quality-wise."

I have not personally tried the Epson Photo 700, but it and its cousin, the Photo 750, are both ESC/P2 printers, and hence will work with NVDI. Unfortunately, the 700 is already discontinued and the 750 is likely to soon follow. The other Photo printers are ESC/P Raster.

If anyone has tried a ESC/P Raster printer on an Atari w/NVDI I'd love to hear of it.

In other news, I'm becoming reasonably confident that any HP Deskjet (except the Windows specific ones [710,720,820,1000 series]) will print 300 dpi color, since they will all respond to the 550C driver without error. I do not know if they will go higher. Of course, since all HP deskjets (except the ones noted) are PCL3 printers, they will also print 600dpi black using the Laserjet driver."

Simon George asks about networking:

"I have a 2080STe and a PC. I am interested in networking the two machines so as I can use the PC as a file server as I don't have a hard drive for my STe."

Has anyone got any suggestions as to how I can go about this relatively inexpensively. I can lay my hands on a LAN card for my PC, what would I need on the other end."

Edward Baiz tells Simon:

"Well if you can get a ST emulator for the PC that could access the MIDI ports of the PC (am not sure if Pacifist does) there is a program I have that will do this. I tried it out with my Hades hooked up to my STe through the MIDI ports. I was able to bring up the files that were on my STe on the Hades. I could then click on the programs that were on my STe's hard drive and they would come up on my Hades. Kind of neat."

Jerry O'Rourke adds:

"You can use the PC's serial port if you set it up as an NFS server. I did this & it worked, but you need to run MiNT on the STE, & 2 MB is probably not enough for all of the networking stuff.

The speed was 19,200, really kind of slow.

The other posters idea about Pacifist is quite good, but if Pacifist does not support the Midi port (this on the soundcard, right?), there might be other emulators (TOSbox, WinSTon, etc) that might.

If none of then do, then you might consider buying a cheap ISA PC serial card & changing the crystal frequency to convert the 38,400 baud output to 31,250 Midi frequency, then set this card us as the main serial port."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week... same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - NFL Gameday 2001! X-Men!!
"Sony/Connectix Suit On Again!
Joystick Junkie! Violence = Porn??
And much much more!

->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!

I've been neglecting this editorial section of the magazine simply because there really hasn't been a lot to say. Games are plentiful and most systems seem to be doing pretty well. Plus, with the summer months, news seems to be slower.

However, both of those factors changed this past week when I saw a few articles on the newswire pertaining to a recent decision in Canada's British Columbia. It seems that a recent game, "Soldier of Fortune", has been determined to be too violent. In order to restrict its sales, B.C.'s Attorney General decided to re-classify the game as "adult material". akin to pornography, and is limiting sales to consumers 18 years old and up!

Here we go again, folks!! Let's watch government get involved in determining what is too much violence. Another case of the government protecting consumers from themselves. Another case of government assuming the role of the world's parents. It's a GAME for cryin' out loud! It's not real! And just so people can say government has had its way, it has a "mature" rating with other appropriate "warnings". From the article:

Soldier of Fortune's carries an industry rating of "M" for mature content, and warns on the box it contains "Animated Blood and Gore." players are also told the game includes a "low-violence installation option."

What's the problem? I am so tired of hearing stories of attempts by the government - any government - getting involved in censorship and the apparent over-protection being meted out for the consumer public. Leave parental responsibilities to parents!

And what British Columbia's Attorney General doesn't realize is that he probably just provided enough publicity for this game that sales will skyrocket! You know, I'm tempted to check the game out myself!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sony On Connectix Patent Case: We'll Go To Trial

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc and Connectix Corp. both made headlines in the past couple of weeks with news that Sony had dropped a patent suit against the emulation software maker and then refiled. The off-again, on-again lawsuit has had some who are watching the proceedings scratch their head.

Recently ZDNet's Daniel Drew Turner spoke with a representative of a law firm which represents Sony, Townsend & Townsend & Crew to find out more. James Gilliland, a partner at the firm, told ZDNet that Sony's case will go to trial this fall.

Sony and Connectix have had a combative relationship in the year and a half since Connectix first revealed its Virtual Game Station software. Virtual Game Station enables Mac users to play many games designed to work with Sony's popular PlayStation console. Sony claims that Virtual Game Station offers a lower-quality experience than a real PlayStation and suggests that the software does not offer the same level of copy protection that a real PlayStation does, as well.

Since then, Sony has sued Connectix in federal court, alleging copyright infringement. Sony saw the majority of its charges against Connectix dismissed earlier this year -- a decision that Gilliland says Sony hopes will be reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Sony then filed its current patent infringement suit against Connectix, but withdrew its suit a days before it was to be reviewed by federal judge Charles Legge. A suit was then refiled hours later with six of the original suit's eleven charges.

Activision Brings the Most Popular Comic of All Time
To Life With The Release of X-MEN: Mutant Academy

For the first time ever, Marvel's successful comic book property X-MEN is brought to life in full 3D with the release of X-MEN Mutant Academy from Activision, Inc. Timed to coincide with the highly anticipated summer release of Twentieth Century Fox's "X-MEN," the action packed game places players in the role of their favorite mutants and challenges them to harness their rage and utilize their special powers as they train with Professor X to become full-fledged members of the X-MEN. X-MEN Mutant Academy will be available for the PlayStation game console and Game Boy Color beginning July 14, 2000 and have been rated "T" (Animated Violence -- "Teen" -- content suitable for person ages 13 and older) and "E" (Mild Animated Violence -- "Everyone" -- content suitable for persons ages six and older) respectively by the ESRB.

"The X-MEN characters are wonderfully suited to the creation of a video game and X-MEN Mutant Academy's stunning graphics and dynamic game play have really allowed us to bring to life some of most popular Super Heroes of all time," said Steve Crane, senior vice president, Activision Studios. "The game not only draws on the X-Men's 36 year history but also incorporates elements of the "X-MEN" movie striking a balance that is sure to appeal to a wide audience."

X-MEN Mutant Academy treats players to the ultimate X-MEN experience and features 10 playable characters -- including Wolverine, Cyclops, Gambit, Beast, Storm, Phoenix, Sabertooth, Mystique, Toad and Magento -- that appear in both their classic comic and movie costumes. Players have four ways to rumble with Academy Training, Arcade Mode, Survival Mode and Versus Mode (classic two-player fighting). In Academy Training, Professor X teaches player how to hone their mutant powers in preparation for the challenges of Arcade and Versus modes. Additionally, Cerebro mode provides fans with loads of X-Men bonus material including "X-MEN" movie clips, behind the scenes movie photos, classic comic book covers and more!

Paradox Development developed X-MEN Mutant Academy for Activision.

NFL GameDay 2001 for the PlayStation Game
Console Hits the Line at Full Speed This August

Continuing to deliver breakthrough football action through revolutionary gameplay and impressive graphics, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced today that NFL GameDay 2001 from 989 Sports will be available this August for the PlayStation game console. Complete with running back Marshall Faulk of the World Champion St. Louis Rams providing strategic input and appearing on the title's box cover, NFL GameDay 2001 features all 31 NFL teams and players, amazingly realistic 3D player and stadium models and tons of new motion-captured moves from 13 NFL players. Announcers Dick Enberg and Phil Simms return to call all the NFL excitement.

"With great graphics and incredible gameplay, the NFL GameDay series, which is the original pro football franchise of the PlayStation game console, captures NFL realism so much that many NFL players are big fans," said Kelly Ryan, director of product development, Sony Computer

Entertainment America Inc. "We're very pleased to team up with Marshall Faulk, a gamer himself and the winner of our 'Game Before the Game' competition at this year's Super Bowl, to bring his world championship expertise to the game as the NFL GameDay 2001 cover athlete and as one of our NFL player consultants."

The GameDay series' award winning gameplay has been enhanced with the new "Play As Any Skill Player" feature that lets gamers become the quarterback, running back, wide receiver or tight end with the press of a button. With "on-the-fly" flexibility, gamers can throw cut blocks as a tight end for a running back, or as a receiver, signal the quarterback to throw the ball. Relentlessly savvy Artificial Intelligence (AI) has computer-controlled opponents learning player's tendencies on offense and defense to shut down the attack. New Total Control Passing allows players to lead or under throw receivers in any direction by simply pressing the directional pad.

NFL GameDay 2001 sports the most realistic graphics to date with each NFL player depicted in amazing detail as they are scaled to their actual size, weight and body style. Stadium interiors are richly detailed and enhanced by animated backgrounds and historic landmarks and players will actually experience wear and tear on the playing field as the game progresses.

For the first time, animations including drag downs, shoves, gang tackles, low and high-wrap tackles, upending tackles, across-the-body "shoestring" catches and sideline "tip-toe" catches capture the intensity of real NFL action. Players can break ankle tackles and drag would-be tacklers on second and third efforts.

NFL GameDay 2001 reflects the latest NFL trends through actual NFL player input -- from motion-capture animations to plays designed with the help of real NFL players. Players motion captured for the NFL GameDay 2001 series are among the game's top names, including Buccaneers FB Mike Alstott, Steelers RB Jerome Bettis, Bengals QB Akili Smith, Jaguars WR Jimmy Smith and LB Hardy Nickerson, Vikings DT John Randle, Raiders WR Tim Brown and CB Charles Woodson, Giants CB Jason Sehorn. Joining Faulk among the 55 NFL stars creating the authentic playbooks for NFL GameDay 2001, were Buccaneers DL Warren Sapp, Vikings QB Dante Culpepper, Bengals RB Corey Dillon and Dolphins LB Zach Thomas.

An improved "GM Mode" lets the videogamer play in multiple seasons as a coach, player or general manager. A new "Draft War Room" feature provides the gamer with a report of team weaknesses allowing players to determine needs on draft day. Gamers can control the everyday activities of a team over several seasons while drafting, trading and signing free agent players. State-of-the-art "Training Camp Mode" lets the gamer sharpen skills and increase knowledge of various offensive and defensive playbooks. The revolutionary "Play Editor" lets the gamer design custom plays and save them to a playbook.

Players can also direct how and where each player will move by assigning individual routes, blocking schemes and defensive alignments and assignments. NFL GameDay 2001 has also refined the "Create Player" feature, allowing gamers to customize a player's physical appearance, salary and mental makeup. Graduating seniors from NCAA GameBreaker 2001 can even be imported to the draft.

NFL GameDay 2001 Key Features:

- Award-winning gameplay including a new feature that allows gamers to play as a quarterback, running back, wide receiver or tight end with

- the "Play As Any Skill Player" option
- Hundreds of new plays designed with the help of 55 NFL players containing the latest trends, formations and plays
- All-new 3D player and stadium models and tons of new motion capture animations from 13 different NFL players, including Charles Woodson, Akili Smith, Jimmy Smith and Mike Alstott
- All 31 NFL teams and players scaled to actual height, weight and body style
- Actual NFL stadiums feature historic landmarks and grass that experiences wear and tear as the game progresses
- Play-by-play legend Dick Enberg and color commentator Phil Simms return with broader and more conversational commentary and insight
- In-game Telestrator provides TV-style instant replays with insight and analysis from Phil Simms
- In-depth NFL player ratings and updated 2000 team rosters, including rookies, free agent signings and trades
- Gamers have the ability to import senior college players from 989 Sports' college football videogame NCAA GameBreaker 2001 to play with the pros in NFL GameDay 2001
- An upgraded "Training Camp Mode" lets the gamer sharpen his skills and increase his knowledge of various offensive and defensive playbooks. Players actually wear practice jerseys and shorts
- "GM Mode" lets the gamer be the coach, player or general manager over multiple seasons, operating with a salary cap. The new "Draft War Room" feature alerts player to team weaknesses. Create, draft, sign, trade and release players and free agents -- just like a real GM
- In-game help menus assist new users who are unfamiliar with the in-game controls
- Team match-ups that detail offensive and defensive strengths and weaknesses
- Design plays and save them to a custom playbook with the revolutionary "Play Editor" allowing gamers to direct how and where players move by assigning pass routes, blocking schemes and defensive maneuvers
- Create a player with the updated "Create Player" feature -- customize a player's physical appearance, salary and mental makeup
- Players perform as in real life as Marshall Faulk jukes to elude flailing arms, Eddie George punishes would-be tacklers, Randy Moss elevates over shorter defenders to grab the deep ball and Brett Favre sports a rifle for an arm
- 150 personalized touchdown dances including Green Bay's traditional "Lambeau Leap," Ken Norton's end zone "Punching Bag," Cris Carter's "Point to the Sky" and more
- Multiple weather conditions including wind, snow and rain as well as player injuries affect gameplay
- "Throwback" uniforms let gamers relive the past with a favorite team
- Comprehensive season statistical tracking in 163 categories - for either a team or a player
- Gameplay modes include preseason, 2000-2001 NFL season play, playoffs, Super Bowl and Pro Bowl
- Pro Bowl selections are based upon the current season with weekly voting updates
- Includes every past Super Bowl team such as the '75 Steelers, '85 Bears and '94 49ers
- Genuine NFL stadium, game and crowd sounds
- Four playing perspectives and a free-floating 3D TV-style presentation
- Four levels of difficulty -- Rookie, Veteran, All-Pro and Hall of Fame
- Complete substitution capability
- Up to 8 players with Multi Tap
- Officially licensed by the NFL and PLAYERS INC

989 Sports' NCAA GameBreaker 2001 and
NCAA All-Time Rushing Leader Ron Dayne
Plow Onto PlayStation in August

Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. announced Wednesday that NCAA GameBreaker 2001 from 989 Sports returns to the PlayStation this August with Heisman Trophy winner Ron Dayne providing strategic input and appearing on the game's package cover. Delivering a balanced attack of unrivaled graphics, great gameplay and a multitude of features, NCAA GameBreaker 2001 includes all 115 Division I-A programs, plus 64 historical teams, 21 bowl games, new player models and more than 250 motion-captured animations. The game features 1,800 plays designed by legendary All-Americans and coaches, five gameplay modes and the call by all-time great announcer Keith Jackson.

NCAA GameBreaker 2001 re-creates the spirit and pageantry of college football Saturdays with all 115 Division I-A football stadiums from Michigan's "Big House" to the Rose Bowl, all rendered in amazing detail, as well as the race for the Heisman Trophy, and conference championships. Adding to the game's realism are more than 30 authentic fight songs and hundreds of motion-captured animations including new tackles, special moves and jukes. Players can utilize special weapon "GameBreakers" who can change a game's complexion whenever they touch the ball.

Former University of Wisconsin running back Ron Dayne, this year's GameBreaker cover boy and a recent New York Giants first round draft pick, has been brought into the studio adding to the game's realism through play calling strategies and play design. Dayne finished his Badger career as college football's all-time rushing leader becoming the first runner to amass more than 7,000 yards on the ground.

"NCAA GameBreaker 2001 captures the look and feel of college football and with our collaboration with Ron Dayne, the NCAA's most prolific running back, GameBreaker lives up to 989 Sports' mantra 'Made by the Pros, Played by the Pros,'" said Kelly Ryan, director of product development, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "With Dayne, Keith Jackson's play-by-play, incredibly realistic stadiums and team-specific playbooks, GameBreaker is college football."

NCAA GameBreaker 2001 features superior gameplay to accompany its amazing graphics and college football realism. With Total Control Passing, players adjust to changing defenses by leading or under-throwing receivers so the ball is placed just where the receiver can catch it. Special moves allow "GameBreakers" to juke overmatched defenders, while a well-timed leap can tip the ball away from the outstretched hands of the intended receiver. A "Career Mode" allows a player to assume the duties of a head coach, coordinator or assistant in leading a run at the National Championship. Players can then progress up the coaching ladder, landing jobs at higher profile schools depending on the success of their squad.

Only NCAA GameBreaker 2001 allows gamers to take their best players to the next level. Gamers are able to save senior players from NCAA GameBreaker 2001 and draft them into the NFL by downloading them into NFL GameDay(TM) 2001, 989 Sports' best-selling pro football game for the PlayStation game console.

NCAA GameBreaker 2001 Key Features:

- All 115 NCAA Division I-A teams and stadiums, plus 64 classic teams from the past
- Authentic college play formations and playbooks featuring more than 1,800 plays designed by college coaches, such as UCLA Bruins coach Bob Toledo and by GameBreaker cover athlete Ron Dayne, the 1999 Heisman Trophy winner
- Five gameplay modes: Scrimmage, Fantasy, Tournament, Bowl Season and Career
- "Career Mode" enables the user to assume the duties of a head coach, coordinator or assistant in leading a run at the National Championship
- TV-style presentation with extended analysis from legendary college football announcer Keith Jackson
- NFL GameDay 2001 compatible - users will be able to save senior players from an NCAA GameBreaker 2001 season and import them into NFL GameDay 2001
- All-new gameplay animations include new tackles, special moves and jukes
- All 3D polygonal players scaled to actual height and weight
- Authentic college fight songs and drums provide the most realistic college football environment, while real audio enhances every juke, grunt and bone-crunching hit
- "Blue Chip Recruiting" feature allows gamers to sign recruits and build powerhouse teams
- Play in 21 different bowl games, including the Rose Bowl, and individual players can compete for the Heisman Trophy, Sears National Championship Trophy, All American Team and Freshman of the Year Award
- Utilizes more than 250 motion capture animations of former college standouts and current NFL Pros, including Akili Smith, Charles Woodson, Tim Brown, Chad Brown, Mike Alstott, Jason Sehorn, Hardy Nickerson, Christian Fauria, Jimmy Smith and Lamont Warren
- "Max Pro" feature allows player to order running backs to block or go out for a pass
- Gamers can control celebration and show-off animations, but must watch out for excessive celebration penalties
- True-to-life "GameBreakers" can change the outcome of a game with each touch of the ball
- Practice field "Play Editor" feature enables users to create and customize their own playbook
- Supports the DUALSHOCK analog controller for the ultra-realistic experience
- Total Control Passing allows players to lead or under-throw receivers so the ball is placed out of the reach of greedy defenders
- Wind, snow and rain all affect gameplay, while uniforms show mud and grass stains depending on field conditions
- Tracking of game and full season statistics in every major category
- Up to 8 players with Multi Tap

The Fluff has Hit the Fan!

Fur Fighters Arrives in Stores

Acclaim Entertainment announced that Fur Fighters for Sega Dreamcast started shipping to retail stores nationwide as of July 13.

Developed by Bizarre Creations, *Fur Fighters* is a genre-busting adventure game in which gamers are tasked to play the role of all six heavily-armed animal liberators on a mission to rescue their children from the Evil General Viggo.

“*Fur Fighters* combines all of the action from first person shooters with the puzzle solving elements of a traditional platform game, all with an incredible sense of humor,” said Evan Stein, Brand Director for Acclaim Entertainment. “The result is an ingenious, premier adventure for Sega Dreamcast featuring characters and a storyline unlike anything we’ve seen on the market.”

Fur Fighters begins as the Evil General Viggo kidnaps the adorable infants of each Fur Fighter and hides them throughout the game universe. The Fur Fighters must unite to conquer the Evil General and reclaim their babies. To successfully complete the game, players must utilize the unique, special abilities given to each Fur Fighter. For example, Juliette the cat can easily climb walls, Rufus the dog is notorious for his ability to dig holes, and Rico the penguin can swim and dive in deep water. Gamers must solve a huge variety of puzzles – from simple switches to complex multi-phase challenges requiring thought, exploration and action. Each puzzle is linked to the storyline, and allows the player to progress through the game and rescue the captured Fur Fighter babies.

Fur Fighters marketing focuses on the dichotomy of the characters and game play. With headlines like “Deadly Bear,” “Fuzzy Wuzzy was a Bear...now he’s Dead,” and “Make a Killing in the Fur Trade,” the in-game humor is accurately reflected. *Fur Fighters* is heavily supported with an award winning print campaign, in store POS, a state-of-the-art website at www.acclaim.com and the Sega Dreamcast’s first ever lenticular packaging.

Sega Serves Up Arcade Hit *Virtua Tennis* for Dreamcast

First Head-to-Head Tennis Game Comes to Sega Dreamcast

Sega serves up an ace today with the release of “*Virtua Tennis*,” its first-ever tennis title for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. “*Virtua Tennis*” features fast-paced gameplay, authentic environments and an array of court surfaces that make this game ultra-realistic and fun to play. “*Virtua Tennis*” delivers rich 3D graphics and crisp animations so the pros in the game move like the pros in real life. Using simple, intuitive controls, gamers feel like they are actually delivering that drop shot or overhead smash.

“*Virtua Tennis*” allows gamers to play solo or match up against each other four at a time, for hard-hitting multi-player fun. Gamers can choose to play eight internationally ranked tennis pros including Jim Courier, Cedric Pioline, Tim Henman, Tommy Haas, Mark Philippoussis, Carlos Moya, Thomas Johansson and Yevgeny Kafelnikov. The pros in the game not only bear each athlete’s physical likeness, but also each electronic player has the pros’ real life skill attributes. Hear the pros’ grunts and groans as they volley for victory with cross-court shots. Watch them go head-to-head on a variety of surfaces -- hard, clay, grass, or carpet -- and see how each surface responds differently.

“*Virtua Tennis* breaks new ground in the tennis genre in terms of graphics and gameplay,” said Gwendolyn Marker, consumer communications manager,

Sega of America. "The game is easy to pick up and play, and provides for hours of replay value with multiple playing modes, new lifelike courts and all-new virtual shopping."

"Virtua Tennis" players can choose "World Circuit Mode" and tour the globe as they battle to win all the big tournaments. With each win, players collect "cash" awards and "shop" in the game. Gamers can go into virtual stores and buy new strings for their rackets, cool tennis apparel or energy drinks. If they're feeling like big spenders, they can buy their way into locked stadiums or take on a new identity and buy locked characters. Once players have completed the entire World Circuit, they can access a secret character that can only be seen by circuit champions.

Sega's got a surprise for those who prefer arcade gameplay. In arcade mode, gamers can progress to different locations with each match won. They too will unlock a secret character after winning all of the arcade mode levels.

To add to the realism, "Virtua Tennis" has included crowds that chime in with "oohs" and "aahhs" with every good or bad play. To add to the fun, Sega has included a replay feature, which allows gamers to watch incredible plays over again, right after they're made.

"Virtua Tennis" is available at retailers nationwide or at www.sega.com. The game is rated "E" for everyone.

Gamers Find Awesome Deals on New and Used Video Games at Hecklers Entertainment's 'JoystickJunkie.com'

Hecklers Entertainment Inc., a leading developer of interactive entertainment on America Online and the World Wide Web, and GTR Group Inc., a leading supplier of value-priced video games and video game accessories to the interactive entertainment industry, announce the launch of "Joystick Junkie" (joystickjunkie.com), the new and used video games superstore.

A video gamer's paradise, Joystick Junkie offers the largest selection of discounted strategy guides, gaming accessories, and the industry's hottest games -- both new and previously played -- for all major platforms including Nintendo 64, Sony PlayStation, Sega Dreamcast, and Game Boy Color. Gamers will soon also be able to trade in their games for online credit toward other games and products.

Hecklers Entertainment partnered with GTR Group Inc.'s e-commerce division, ZapYou.com, to provide e-commerce services. ZapYou offered a comprehensive package of services including: merchandising, promotion, program design, Web site design, payment, fulfillment of orders, inventory management, supplier relations, customer support, reporting and planning.

"Joystick Junkie provides our millions of network visitors with a comprehensive selection of the hottest video game products at a huge discount," said Scott Davis, co-founder of Hecklers Entertainment Inc. "We're very excited about partnering with one of the industry's leaders in entertainment accessories and video games. ZapYou.com allows us to expand and strengthen our numerous online communities."

"We're thrilled to partner with Hecklers Entertainment Inc., one of the Internet's premier fun and games networks," said Peter Koziccz, GTR Group's

President and CEO. "As a result of this partnership, members of the Hecklers communities will be able to choose from the broadest selection of video game titles and accessories available anywhere on the Internet."

"Hecklers' content-rich Web sites and loyal following, coupled with ZapYou.com's innovative e-commerce formula, creates a compelling product and service offering to video game enthusiasts through Joystick Junkie," said Steve Reed, president of GTR Group's Internet Division.

Computer Games More Realistic

Making a computer game may once have been the exclusive domain of techno-geeks. But today's games, especially ones based on television shows or films, take as much work as any Hollywood epic.

The upcoming "Star Trek: Voyager - Elite Force," for instance, required a casting director, voice-over director and most of the cast of the Paramount TV series, from Captain Janeway to Officer Tuvok. The script alone ran more than 700 pages - five times the length of a typical feature film script.

As technology has made computer games more lifelike, players are demanding a more rewarding experience, including the participation of original cast members for games drawn from other media. It can take up to two years to produce a computer game at a cost of millions. Most of that money goes to the three-dimensional graphics and shoot-em-up special effects.

About 10 percent of the budget for new Star Trek: Voyager game, developed by Madison, Wisc.-based Raven Software and being published later this summer by Santa Monica-based Activision Inc., went to paying actors Kate Mulgrew, Robert Picardo and the other actors who appear on Paramount's syndicated show.

"The dedicated fans do have a desire to hear the characters as they appear on the show and in the movies," said Laird Malamed, executive producer at Activision. "All of the fans of gaming in general appreciate well-recorded, well-performed material and the best way to get that is to get the characters who have done this over and over again."

The attention to detail extends to foreign language versions of the game as well. For the German and French versions of the game, Activision employs the same actors who dub the television show.

The wrinkle in producing a game is that, unlike a film or television show, the plot is not linear. There are dozens and perhaps hundreds of twists in a plot, which is controlled by the player. Actors may record lines which never get heard. Or a character may appear only if a complex series of conditions are first met.

For instance, in the Voyager game, a player, who assumes the role of an ensign, may be faced with the choice of saving a character's life. If the player fails, the character disappears and hours of recorded dialogue are never heard.

For one pivotal scene, three actors were required to record the same lines. Choices made earlier in the game by the player determine which character appears in the scene.

Unlike voice-over sessions of animated programs such as "The Simpsons," cast members recording for a game do not read scenes together. Instead, actors must deliver lines in isolation, without the verbal and visual cues normally provided by fellow cast members.

"I'm able to remember what the actor before did so when it's cut it sounds like conversation," said Kris Zimmerman, a free-lance director who worked on the *Voyager* game.

Another challenge is that a game, unlike a television episode, often includes non sequiturs - bits and pieces of dialogue that may or may not be heard depending on the action. For instance, several actors were asked to scream dozens of times to match a variety of possible scenarios.

The actors also bring their own institutional memories to the role, changing dialogue or suggesting alternative actions to make the game truer to the series.

"I had watched the show, but not regularly," said Zimmerman. "When I was directing Kate Mulgrew, there's a situation where she had to ask for lifelines and I asked her to read it again with more concern, and she said, 'My character has been saying it this way for six years.' "

Robert Duncan McNeil, who plays Ensign Tom Paris on the show, had a similar experience.

"We rewrote some lines," he said. "There was dialogue I could just tell as we spoke it that it wasn't something we would do."

McNeil said recording lines for the game was a bit disorienting, but rewarding in the end.

"I was impressed at how close it felt to what we actually do," he said. "I was impressed with the lifelike quality of the game and how it involves the person playing. The set looks like our sets."

British Columbia Moves to Limit Violent Video Games

Stores in British Columbia have begun pulling the "Soldier of Fortune" computer game away from the eyes of children after a precedent-setting ruling that equates its violent content with pornography.

B.C. Attorney General Andrew Petter this week ordered the game classified as adult material and also warned game creators to reduce the amount of violence in their products.

"It's one parents should be worried about and one I believe the government needs to act upon," Petter told reporters.

The ruling is believed to be the first of its kind in North America and followed a complaint about the content, such as having a player fire a flame thrower at an opponent and watch it burn in graphic agony.

Critics of the ruling argued on Thursday it was an unwanted government intrusion and could potentially devastate computer game sales in the province because so many are based on violence, including allowing players

to kill opponents.

"It is very graphic, but like in all games it is something you get over in the first minute and after that it is just part of the game," said Steve Oliver, manager of the Interaction Computer Entertainment store in North Vancouver.

Soldier of Fortune's carries an industry rating of "M" for mature content, and warns on the box it contains "Animated Blood and Gore." players are also told the game includes a "low-violence installation option."

The British Columbia Film Classification Office, which recommended the restriction after reviewing the game just as it would a movie, said "the inconvenience is necessary to protect the interests of the public."

Soldier of Fortune's Canadian distributor referred questions about the ruling to the Canadian Interactive Digital Software Association, which was not immediately available for comment.

According to a survey released in May by the U.S.-based Interactive Digital Software Association, 28 percent of frequent players of computer games are under 18, while 30 percent are between 18 and 35.

The group said the study also showed most people play with friends and it hoped the results would dispel "the myth that games are not a social activity." The IDSA is fighting efforts to have a government-imposed rating system in the U.S.

Oliver has stopped selling the Soldier of Fortune because his store does not carry pornographic games, but thinks the ruling's publicity will backfire. "People are going to be in and asking about it like you wouldn't believe now," he said.

Another critic of the ruling said it will not work because children can already download versions of Soldier of Fortune from the Internet.

"When you consider that you're the only one in the world doing it, you're either really cutting edge or you're really off the wall," said Ron Haidenger, vice president of the Digital U cybercafe in Vancouver.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Lloyd's Offers Hacker Insurance

Lloyd's of London will offer up to \$100 million in insurance coverage to clients of computer security management firm Counterpane Security Inc. against hacker losses to their business or their customers.

Counterpane in its announcement Monday claimed to be the first Internet security service provider to provide a guarantee of direct financial reimbursement in the event a hacker breaks through its defenses and uses customer data. The guarantee is underwritten by insurance brokers Frank Crystal & Co. and SafeOnline, with additional coverage available for purchase from Lloyd's, the world's leading insurance market.

"This is not for your home user, this is for Yahoo!, this is for CDUniverse, which lost all those credit card numbers (to a hacker) in January," said Bruce Schneier, chief technology officer at Counterpane. "It's threat-avoidance. This, along with monitoring, is just another arrow in your quiver."

Standard computer security includes firewalls, antivirus software that is updated weekly and systems that can prevent the entry of hackers. But experts say much of that software contains weaknesses that can be exploited by enterprising hackers.

An FBI-funded report in March, based on responses from 643 mainly large companies and government agencies, suggested an epidemic of computer crime is under way across the United States. Since March 1999, nine out of 10 organizations reported computer security breaches, according to the annual Internet crime survey by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the San Francisco-based Computer Security Institute.

The most common forms of unauthorized computer intrusions are still viruses, stolen laptop computers and employees abusing their Internet privileges. But businesses increasingly are reporting more serious incidents, including system penetration from the outside, financial fraud, data network sabotage, or denial-of-service attacks - a deluge of repetitive requests sent to clog a Web site's computers until they seize up.

Various organizations have estimated that hacker attacks this year have cost businesses tens of billions of dollars, mostly in lost time. A study released last week by Jericho, N.Y.-based Reality Research estimated businesses worldwide will lose more than \$1.5 trillion this year due to computer viruses spread through the Internet.

The "ILOVEYOU" virus earlier this year, spread via e-mail, affected about 45 million computer files at a cost to companies of \$2.61 billion alone, according to Computer Economics Inc.

Counterpane's Schneier said a \$20,000 annual premium will provide coverage for \$1 million in hacker losses; the cost rises to \$75,000 for \$10 million in losses. The price any additional coverage, up to \$100 million, must be negotiated with Lloyds.

Some regular insurance policies pay hacker losses under loss-of-business or act-of-vandalism clauses, but there are few policies written to specifically cover hacker attacks. And those that do often carry premiums that start at \$100,000 and run up to \$3 million.

Analysts say the hacker insurance market is expected to grow to billions of dollars in annual premiums by the end of the decade, reflecting the growing popularity of electronic commerce. But insurers have been reluctant to be the ground-breakers because there currently are no effective tools for measuring the risk.

INSUREtrust.com also assesses security risks, but provides protection only

for what it calls "residual risks."

IBM and Sedgwick Group PLC, the world's third-largest insurance broker provide products ranging from security reviews to compensation for lawsuits brought by victims of online credit card fraud. And International Computer Security Association, an Internet security company, announced in 1998 it will pay corporations up to \$250,000 if hackers successfully crack its computer system.

U.S. Lets Hacker Back Online

A notorious computer hacker who led the FBI on a three-year manhunt while allegedly causing millions of dollars in damage to technology companies now has federal permission to pursue work as a computer consultant or online writer.

It's a "180 degree change" in the restrictions previously enforced by Kevin Mitnick's probation officer, Mitnick attorney Donald Randolph said Wednesday.

Under terms of his 1995 plea agreement, Mitnick had been barred from any contact with computers, cellular phones or any other technology capable of online access.

After his release from prison in January, his probation officer also barred him from speaking publicly or writing about technology-related issues and from taking any job that might give him access to a computer.

Mitnick, 36, challenged the limitations, and a federal judge last month ruled such blanket decisions were unacceptable without consideration of the specific offers.

His federal probation officer informed him this week that he could pursue some computer-related work, Randolph said. Among the jobs approved: writing for Steven Brill's online magazine Contentville, speaking in Los Angeles on computer security, consulting on computer security and consulting for a computer-related television show.

Randolph said he believes Mitnick is considering taking advantage of all opportunities, though he remains barred from leaving Southern California.

"We are pleased with the decision because we think it lends itself to the rehabilitation of Kevin," said attorney Sherman Ellison, who also represents Mitnick. "It's also constructive for the community to use this man's brain for the benefit of the community."

Calls to Southern California U.S. Probation Offices for comment late Wednesday rang unanswered.

Mitnick spent five years in prison after FBI investigators traced his electronic footprints to a Raleigh, N.C., apartment in 1995. He is said to have cost companies millions of dollars by stealing their software and altering computer information. The victims included Motorola, Novell, Nokia and Sun Microsystems, and the University of Southern California.

Mr. Napster Goes to Washington

Napster and MP3.com executives testify before Congress over worries that digital music technology is robbing recording artists.

The dispute between recording artists and digital music-swapping technology such as Napster blared into Washington D.C. Tuesday, as Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich squared off against Napster CEO Hank Barry in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"Metallica is not anti-technology .. but how can we embrace a new format when somebody with a few lines of code-simply gives it away?" Asked Ulrich, criticizing Napster for allowing users to exchange music files without compensation for artists.

"If music is free for download, the music industry is not viable," said Ulrich.

But Barry countered that Napster's 20 million users demonstrate that consumers want a new way to share music -- and that music-sharing programs lead to more record sales, not fewer.

"More access to music leads to more sales of music," said Barry. He said that users who download 20 or more files from Napster end up deleting 90 percent of those files.

The Committee was holding a fact-finding session on the issue of digital downloading, which is currently the subject of a number of lawsuits between services such as Napster and MP3.com and the Recording Industry Association of America.

Ulrich said the issue wasn't Napster, specifically -- "Metallica is not anti-technology," he said - but rather that the new technology is being used to distribute music for which artists aren't getting paid

"How does this square with the level playing field of a free market system?" he asked.

He said Napster-like technology particularly hits hard on artists not as well known as Metallica, and the large number of workers in others parts of the music and recording businesses.

But executives from Napster and MP3.com said that new technology is the issue - that copyright holders have always fought innovations that threatened to interrupt their fat cash flow.

MP3.com CEO Michael Robertson said he agreed to pay "enormous amounts' to license music from major record labels weeks ago, but that those companies have yet to deliver full music catalogs to MP3's users.

"We're still not able to offer that music to consumers," said Robertson. "We're willing to pay, but that's not the issue in my opinion. The issue of barriers to competition."

MP3.com last month reached a settlement with two record labels, allowing it to include the labels' songs in its My.MP3.com service, which allows users to store music digitally and then access it via any computer.

Under the settlement, each label would receive between \$15 million and \$25

million, sources said. Additionally, MP3.com would pay an undisclosed fee each time that label's CD is registered by a user and another fee each time a user accesses one of its songs.

The hearing highlights the digital collision between users who want to be able to easily download music files and play them in a range of devices, with the need or artists to get paid for their work.

"If you write a song ... you ought to be rewarded for that. At the same time let's no strangle the baby in the crib," said Sen. Charles Leahy, (D-Vt.) Committee Chairman Sen. Orrin Hatch called for compromise between music artists and the music-swapping services.

"Some creative cooperation might be to everyone's benefit," Hatch said.

Others testifying at the hearing included Byrds co-founder Roger McGuinn.

eBay Asks Court to Ban User for Bad Language

Internet "trading community" eBay Inc. said on Wednesday that it had asked a federal judge to bar a Chicago man from its Web site for using foul language and flouting its own attempts to ban him.

A spokesman for the popular company, which 12 million people use to offer and bid on items ranging from fine art to concert tickets, said many users had complained about insulting language used by Braxton Anderson under his various electronic aliases.

An attorney for Anderson, 33, won a delay until Monday for the judge's consideration of eBay's petition to have him barred from the site for life, according to Kevin Pursglove, a spokesman for the company, which is based in San Jose, California.

"He's disrupting the normal course of conduct (of eBay transactions). ... We've had numerous complaints from other users that he uses profane, abusive language," Pursglove said.

Although the company has "terminated 40 to 45 of his accounts in the last three months alone," Anderson has circumvented the company's moves by re-registering under other identities, Pursglove said.

eBay has terminated customers before, but this was the first time that it had resorted to court intervention, he said.

Anderson could not be reached for comment. He told the Chicago Sun-Times that he was being singled out by a group of eBay customers and that he had already said he would not return to the Web site.

'Smash' Virus Could Hit Friday

A virus that launches on the 14th day of the month could hit computers tomorrow, July 14, security experts warn.

At the same time, experts are hesitant to overplay the threat of the

Windows 95 "Smash" virus (Win95.Smash.10262), as it has not yet been found in the wild.

"We wanted to put something out there because some of our clients were reading about it in the media," said Simon Perry, virus expert at Computer Associates International Inc. in Islandia, N.Y. "The bottom line is, if you get it, it's very damaging, but right now it's not likely you'll get it."

The Smash virus is technically sophisticated and what might be called socially clever.

Technically, the virus uses low-level system calls that are made directly to BIOS memory to launch. It uses a technique called 'tunneling' (not related to VPN tunneling) to set up a "trap flag" to corrupt the Interrupt 13 BIOS store. The end game of a complex chain of BIOS events is to reformat the hard drive, destroying all information previously stored there.

Socially, the as-yet unidentified authors use the so-called "blue screen of death" (the screen that displays when the Windows operating system crashes), preying on common user reactions to such screens to launch the virus' payload.

When activated, the virus displays a blue screen in Windows that reads:

Virus Warning!
Virus name is 'SMASH', project D version 0x0A.
Created and compiled by Domitor.
Seems like your bad dream comes true ...

According to a warning issued by Computer Associates, "The next time the computer is rebooted, the malicious code will take effect, rendering the machine unusable. Since the machine hangs after the [blue screen] message is displayed, it is likely that the user of the machine would either press any key or try to reboot the machine at this point, therefore unwittingly causing the payload to execute."

Perry said most anti-virus vendors have added detection for the virus over the past couple of weeks.

EBay Reducing Live Auctions

Online auctioneer eBay is cutting back its live auction businesses in an effort to sell more high-end art and antiques on the Internet.

The move this month will result in the layoffs of 13 of 21 employees in the Chicago office of subsidiary Butterfield & Butterfield, eBay spokesman Kevin Pursglove said Thursday.

A review of the Chicago office's activities found much of the merchandise first inventoried there actually is being sold in Butterfield & Butterfield's San Francisco office, Pursglove said, reducing the need for a physical Midwest presence.

The remaining Chicago staffers will inventory and appraise merchandise for sale on eBay's Great Collections Web site.

EBay purchased Butterfield & Butterfield early last year for \$260 million.

Microsoft Releases Latest IE Web Browser

Microsoft today released the latest version of its Internet Explorer Web browser, chairman Bill Gates announced at a company event.

In his keynote address at the Microsoft Professional Developers Conference 2000 in Orlando, Fla., Gates highlighted IE 5.5 improvements for Web site developers, including enhancements that result in faster page loading and more support for industry standards, according to Microsoft.

Microsoft released international versions of the 5.5 browser last week.

At the conference, Gates also proselytized the company's new .Net initiative, which moves Microsoft toward more Web-based software offerings. According to Gates, IE 5.5 is the best choice for software and for Web site developers who develop products based on the .Net technology.

The new browser version features improved support for Web standards, including Cascading Style Sheets 1 (CSS) and Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL) as well as a Microsoft presentation technology known as dynamic HTML (DHTML).

With IE 5.5, Microsoft will add a print preview capability and improvements in the speed and reliability of printing.

The next version of Microsoft's consumer operating system, Windows Me, includes IE 5.5. That product is expected to ship this fall.

At the conference, Microsoft also announced that its 64-bit version of Windows is nearly ready to ship to developers. Yesterday, the company confirmed it would no longer include its Java-based tool in its Visual Studio .Net product, a decision that is likely to make it more difficult for independent developers to write Java applications for Windows.

Company Says Forget Business Cards, Use WEBcards

If Munir Moon has his way, traditional business cards with a person's name and address may soon become a niche product like the typewriter.

Moon is president and CEO of Moon Global Network, an Internet and technological services company. Today the company announced the launch of Business-CD.com, an Internet site and business that specializes in the creation and reproduction of digital business cards called WEBcards. These business card sized CD-ROMs can be designed to contain volumes of information about a company in a full multi-media format, including product catalogues, Moon says in a press release announcing the product. A WEBcard holds 32MB of data (i.e. multimedia programs, standard installation programs, HTML, video, audio, application data etc.)

"Why just hand out a business card when you could be handing out your company's Web site, brochure, product catalog, video clips, PowerPoint presentations, reports and thousands of pages of documents all built into

one convenient CD-ROM disk that fits in the palm of your hand?" he says. "That's what our Business-CD digital business cards can do for you. Our digital business cards can offer companies a variety of features and services that will streamline and enhance their marketing efforts."

Business-CD.com's digital business cards work with both Mac and Windows systems. Moon says they can be designed to automatically start an interactive program that can explain and show your product line, play presentations, load software, offer instructional videos, provide technical support and relay about any kind of marketing information desired. In addition, the CD's, which are about the same dimensions as an ordinary business card, are imprinted with company information, logos and contact data so they offer the basic information yet so much more, he says.

Moon Global Network says that the advantages of WEBcards are:

- * You can add your Web site onto a single digital business card, and link to online Web sites and e-Commerce catalogs from your digital business card
- * They're more cost effective than traditional catalogs, not to mention easier to transport and mail
- * You can include company video presentations or training sessions
- * Customer support calls can be reduced by adding FAQs (frequently asked questions) and interactive customer support to your Business-CD card

"This little card can do more for your products and services than traditional printed material. The possibilities are endless," Moon says, noting that because the mini-CDs can store thousands of pages of information, they're particularly well suited for companies that offer product catalogues.

He adds that the company has a team of multimedia, Web development and graphic arts professionals ready to develop your WEBcard and an interactive front-end program to launch once your WEBcard is inserted. A front-end program is a multimedia program that contains buttons that call external or internal files located on the disk. Examples of such files are a disk-based Web site, Adobe PDF files, company programs, video or external links to an online Web site or e-Commerce catalog.

Microsoft Gives Details of Software-for-rent Strategy

Microsoft today popped the cork on its plans to sell software through subscriptions rather than through licenses, as it now does.

Microsoft said its new plan will help the company sell its software through application service providers, companies that host software programs that are usable over the Web. The software giant, which said this would be the first in a series of Windows-related initiatives expected to be introduced over the next two years, made the announcement during its annual partner show in Atlanta.

Under the new plan, businesses will not buy copies of Windows or Microsoft Office software with a PC. Instead, they will effectively rent software from ASPs and pay a per-user monthly fee to use the software. The more

applications each individual uses, the larger the monthly fee.

Whether this new strategy will help customers save money remains to be seen. One analyst pointed out, however, that after reviewing prices under a pilot program it seems that the subscription method could cost more than buying software outright after two years of use.

"The prices look high when you compare them to the regular shrink-wrap prices of software," Gartner analyst Neil MacDonald said. "Basically, Microsoft has taken their shrink-wrap software price and divided it by 24 months."

Because most Microsoft customers keep their software more than 24 months, "most people are going to find these prices expensive," MacDonald said. "I expect (Microsoft) will go through restructuring at least twice before they settle in on a pricing model."

Though known primarily for its software, Microsoft is also legendary within the computer industry for how it structures its sales programs. Microsoft Office became the most popular application suite partly through the company's bundling strategy. Training subsidies, equity investments and other incentives helped convert several Novell specialists to Windows NT in the past decade.

"Pricing is a big deal, but it's not the only deal," said Hurwitz Group analyst Bill Martorelli. "The obsession with pricing masks a more fundamental issue"--the fact that most ASPs are grappling with ways to educate customers on the new model and giving customers more reasons why they should even invest in the service, he said.

Under the ASP Service Delivery Initiative, Microsoft will offer ASPs a series of how-to marketing guides, extended support services from Microsoft, and system integration services from, among others, Andersen Consulting, Compaq Computer and EDS.

Microsoft also created an ASP certification program, which will help customers identify those ASPs that have met Microsoft's guidelines to successfully implement and deliver a hosted product.

In addition, Microsoft will not require ASPs to pay the company for software until the ASP customer pays. This strategy is a serious departure for the software giant; currently, Microsoft middlemen, including PC manufacturers, pay the company first, then sell the software to their customers.

Although the ASP market is still in its infancy, market research firm International Data Corp. expects it to reach \$2 billion by 2003.

Like a number of major technology firms, Microsoft has made an aggressive effort to tackle the lucrative application hosting market. During the past year, the company has forged links with ASPs that will host, install, manage and support Microsoft products such as the Windows 2000 operating system, Office 2000 productivity software, Exchange messaging tools, Windows 2000 Server and SQL Server.

Microsoft already has partnerships with several ASPs and Web hosting firms, including Corio, Digex, FutureLink and Cable & Wireless.

Under the pilot pricing plan, Microsoft would charge \$3.25 per user, per month for a Windows 2000 or Exchange license. For Windows 2000 Server, the

cost would be \$35 per month. The charge for hosting Exchange Server and the SQL Server would cost ASPs around \$65 and \$185 per month, respectively.

Dwight Krossa, Microsoft's director of marketing for the Windows 2000 solutions group, said the pricing is from a commercial pricing pilot initiated about eight months ago, "and it is not the licensing we will reveal under nondisclosure to Microsoft-certified solution providers."

"The prices we have now that will be available to our solution providers on Aug. 1 are not even in that form, and they don't even work the same way as the pilot," he said. "They're not even accurate."

Among other pilot prices, Microsoft posted a price of \$365 per month to license its Site Server Commerce server and the SQL application Internet connector. The Windows 2000 Advanced Server, which is a multi-seat version of the OS designed for use on servers, would cost partners \$145 per month.

Because the ASP market is still in its infancy, many companies are experimenting with pricing, including Microsoft.

"What they've done here is bent over backwards to make sure they don't lose revenue," MacDonald said. "Microsoft is paranoid about their revenue numbers--especially since they didn't meet their expectations last quarter--and losing money because they initially came out too low."

Microsoft also has departed from standard desktop licensing and volume discounts common among PC makers. Larger software buyers, such as Compaq and Dell Computer, get bigger discounts than smaller competitors.

With ASPs, Microsoft initially plans no volume discounts. Krossa said the software licensing model used for PCs didn't make sense for the service provider market.

But MacDonald believes Microsoft's antitrust case may have much to do with the pricing shift. One of the government's longstanding allegations is that Microsoft uses volume discounts to discriminate against companies that fail to embrace the entire Microsoft package.

"It's very likely that the current scrutiny they're under from (the) Justice Department had a lot to do with the pricing model," MacDonald said.

Corio, which received a \$10 million investment from Microsoft in January for joint research and development efforts, is a participant of Microsoft's pilot program and was involved in helping the software giant establish some of its fees.

Larry Yu, a spokesman for Corio, said Microsoft's fees are reasonable. "It still allows us to enjoy the good margins...and enables customers to see greater cost advantages," he said.

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